

Honorable Kelley S. Coyner  
Administrator  
Research and Special Programs Administration  
Washington, D.C. 20590

OCT 27 1999

Dear Ms. Coyner:

The National Transportation Safety Board received your August 6, 1999, letter responding to Safety Recommendation P-99-1, which was issued to the Research and Special Programs Administration (RSPA) on April 28, 1999, as a result of the Safety Board's investigation of the July 21, 1997, gas pipeline rupture and fire in Indianapolis, Indiana. The Safety Board asked that RSPA, when reviewing pipeline operator safety programs, ensure that the operators' damage prevention programs include actions to protect their facilities when directional drilling operations are conducted in proximity to those facilities.

The Safety Board is pleased to note that RSPA revised its inspection form for hazardous liquid pipelines to specifically examine how operators monitor trenchless technology operations in the vicinity of underground pipelines. The "Locating and Marking Pipelines (Damage Prevention)" section on this form notes the criticality of locating buried pipe and of the qualifications of personnel performing this work, whether employed by the operator or by contract services such as a line locating company, a corrosion survey company, or pipeline surveyors. Further, the form now asks whether the operator's damage prevention includes actions to protect its facilities when directional drilling operations are conducted close to them. Further, we understand that RSPA is making similar changes to the natural gas inspection form and, in the interim, is providing supplemental inspection guidance to natural gas inspectors.

In addition, RSPA has issued an advisory bulletin to inform pipeline operators of the hazards of directional drilling and ways to protect their underground facilities. Noting that facilities are at different depths due to varying regulatory requirements and business practices, this advisory emphasizes the possibility of damaging underground facilities without being aware of it and also provides information on the inspection form noted above.

Because RSPA has taken action as requested, Safety Recommendation P-99-1 has been classified "Closed—Acceptable Action." Thank you for acting promptly to address this issue.

Sincerely,  
ORIGINAL SIGNED BY  
JIM HALL

Jim Hall  
Chairman

cc: Mr. Robert Clarke, Safety and Health Team Leader  
Office of Transportation Policy Development

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